

Top The stand-alone entertaining pavilion Above right This pampered pooch is right at home Right Abstract pipe work and climbers conceal a 50,000-litre water tank Far right Recycled timber, radiating out from one of the garden's bigger trees, forms a striking feature Below Pavers contrast the lush greenery



# Natural

# course

A garden designer guided by the principles of Mother Nature

Words Tony Fawcett

Photography Mark Taylor



Left A magnificent cork tree is complemented by nearby decking and a pond Below Hydrangeas are among the pretty blooms that abound come summer Bottom Award-winning garden designer Richard Bellemo Bottom left The aquaponic wall

**A**n avid camper and lover of the great outdoors, garden designer Richard Bellemo believes firmly in the bush-camping credo of 'leave no trace'.

And for him it doesn't just apply to the bush. He reckons it's equally important in garden design.

So when Richard was called in to work his design and construction magic on this large Deepdene property, he vowed to tread lightly, creating a leafy oasis that might have existed here for a decade or more.

What he has achieved is a winner, literally. Apart from showing no telltale signs of the construction that went into one of the biggest work sites he has experienced, this serene and luxuriant garden won last year's Landscaping Victoria award for Landscape of the Year.

"I'm really happy with this garden and its intimate and earthy feel," says Richard, explaining his belief that nature is the best inspiration and that, even in quite formal gardens such as this, natural principles should still apply.

### Eco wonderland

Walk into this garden and you're immediately hit with its welcoming green and organic richness ... banks of foliage, shade and light, tranquil water, and timbers and rocks exuding their natural beauty.

Examine closer and you realise this

natural, environmental approach cuts deeper. For starters, this garden boasts a semi-buried 50,000-litre water tank ingeniously hidden behind abstract pipe work and climbers.

The tank is big enough to meet most garden needs, and is fed by water from the roof surface of the house. Natural garden run-off finds its way, via gravity, into a pit from where it is pumped into the tank.

Most of the garden's materials have been sourced locally and much is recycled – from the striking alfresco kitchen and entertaining pavilion (built from reclaimed local Australian timber) with its custom-built, wood-fired oven, fridge, sink and gas barbecue, to the self-sustainable and tranquil water feature with its aquaponic wall.

Via the water feature's sophisticated filtration system, pond water is circulated through the wall, dispensing moisture and nutrients, supplied by the resident fish, to a wide variety of plants. Being continually pumped and filtered, the water remains clean and well oxygenated.

Elsewhere, connecting pathways have been formed from steppers rather than solid paths, reducing run-off and erosion while allowing more rainwater to be taken up by the soil.

### Eating out

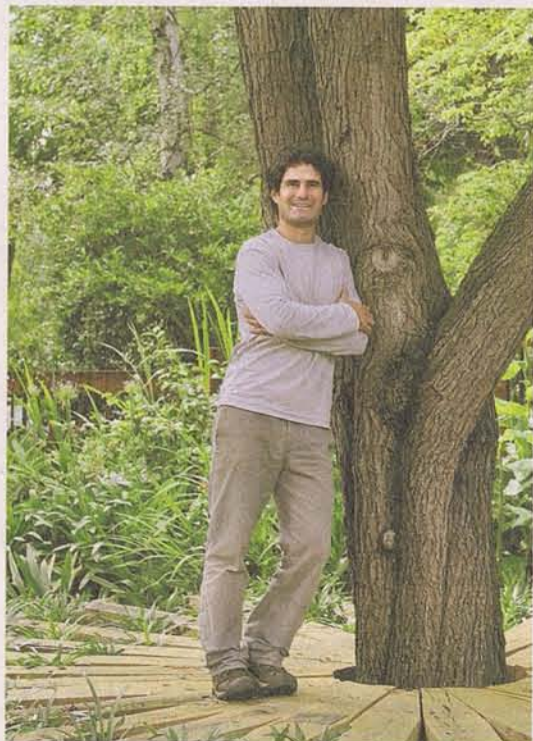
Richard believes outdoor dining is an important part of the Australian lifestyle.

The dining area in this garden is a laid-back, stand-alone structure with a slate shingle roof. It's a garden highlight and an award winner in its own right. Practical yet delightfully rustic, it's encircled by a pond.

Nearby, set off by curved hardwood decking, is a magnificent cork tree, a soaring and thick-barked native of Mediterranean areas, that nature-loving Richard reasoned demanded to be showcased.

Elsewhere this tribute to nature continues in a similar vein with a spa, dry-stone walling and even a bocce pit integrating seamlessly with the greenery. Lawn is the drought-tolerant and hard-wearing Sir Walter Buffalo variety.

This is a timeless, sustainable garden designed to last – which is just the way Richard Bellemo likes it. 🏡



● For more information on Richard Bellemo, see [www.rblandscapes.com.au](http://www.rblandscapes.com.au)